

Cultivating Change in the Fire Service

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Abstract

All too often the company officer fails to exercise power for fear of falling out of favor with the existing culture. This is especially prevalent in the fire service where a higher level of caring for one another is necessary for survival.

The problem which prompted this research paper is that the organization of the NPDF have historically failed to recognize a distinction between the ranks of Captain and Lieutenant. As a result, role ambiguity has developed that undermines the authority of Captains and prevents them from fulfilling their appropriate mission within the department's new rank structure.

The purpose of this research project was to establish a program that empowered the officer rank with due responsibility, authority, and discipline rights. The primary focus was on the Captains' rank.

Historical and action research methods were used to identify the differences of opinion on each organizational level regarding perceptions of legitimate power and responsibility, general attitudes on discipline and leadership, and areas of deficiency. Closed ended surveys and personal interviews with key figures within the NPDF were used to identify problem areas.

Statistics indicated that personnel believed they were performing to institutionalized perceptions with great success. In contrast, they believe department managers are unable to handle fire department issues pertaining to leadership, discipline, and administration. The directing resistive and supporting forces were similarly driven by these three distinct areas of deficiency. A framework is necessary for developing a comprehensive, yet

pragmatic portfolio of improvement initiatives that align with the organizations improvement objectives.

Shared vision among senior officers, realigning philosophy and department goals is indispensable when defining the scope of proposed recommendations. The nature of these proposed changes represent a major deviation from the way the NPFD currently functions. The recommendations include identifying areas in need of reorganization and reauthorization particularly within the Captains rank.

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Introduction

In the Fire Service environment, making certain decisions may strain personal relationships. According to Providence Fire Battalion Chief Varone, "One of the most well documented paradoxes in the Fire Service is that of an officer having to conduct him or herself as a leader, while maintaining a friendly relationship with subordinate personnel" (personal interview, December 6, 1997). "This is especially prevalent in professions where a higher level of caring for one another is necessary at times for survival" (personal interview with North Providence Battalion Chief Zarlenga, November 15, 1997). Therefore, it is easy to understand why company officers are hesitant to exercise legitimate authority while in performance of duties. Springfield Township Chief Gasaway noted, "All too often, the company officer will fail to exercise his/her power for fear of falling out of favor with the existing culture" (personal communication, October 20, 1997). In addition Chief Varone noted, "The tension between autocratic power and friendship has left many, due to their aspirations, with difficult choices" (personal interview, December 6, 1997). Personal realization of truth which separates professional responsibility from friendship, as it applies to the exercise of power, is extremely difficult. North Providence Fire Captain Albanese noted, "Most people in power who are affected by this consideration are too involved to make a change" (personal interview, October 14, 1997).

Difficulties typically arise for company officers when they become too concerned with how they are perceived when conflicts arise, while exercising their responsibility and delegating of authority. Often, when officers choose emotive based conduct as a platform for leadership and power, they become paralyzed by inconsistencies created therein. "Such inconsistencies occur as a result of differences in individual relationships among the

personnel for which they are responsible” (personal interview with North Providence Fire Captain Roy, October 13, 1997). For example, those under their command quickly recognize this favoritism which creates an environment of hostility and apathy. Further compounding this leadership paradox is the locus of power which rests in the hands of political concerns. “Political insiders, influential in the final outcome of all unfavorable decisions are a major resistive force in the areas of discipline and control” (personal interview with North Providence Fire Captain Giammarco, October 3, 1997). Therefore, Chief Gasaway stated, “Typically, divisional lines are formed within the informal organization which stagnates productivity, hampers innovation, and undermines leadership potential” (personal communication, October 20, 1997).

The Focus

The problem which prompted this research project is that there is an absence of applied legitimate authoritarian power in the rank of Captain within the station houses of North Providence Fire Department. As a result, “There is an absence of distinction between the ranks of Captain and Lieutenant relative to authority” (personal interview with North Providence Fire Captain DiGuilio, October 1, 1997). These issues exhibit themselves in very subtle ways and if taken individually would seem too insignificant to warrant attention on a departmental scale. However, “Such problems manifest themselves as low morale, high absenteeism, poor work quality, insubordination and decreased confidence in management” (personal interview with Battalion Chief Zarlenga, December 6, 1997). There is also a major shift of the locus of power from middle management to the firefighters. “Firefighters who should be given delegated responsibilities are now casually insubordinate and self directed” (personal interview with Captain DiGuilio, November 17,

1997). “The labor organization representing the membership is directing rules and regulations, favoring labor’s personal agenda and resulting in callous disregard for the department and the community” (personal interview with Battalion Chief Zarlenga, December 5,1997).

The purpose of this research project was to identify the problems regarding delegation of duties, discipline and to recommend solutions that will empower the officers’ rank with due responsibility, authority, and discipline rights. The research questions were directed at the company officer level, particularly within the Captain’s rank.

Historical and action research methods were used to identify:

1. What are the differences of opinion regarding power and responsibility?
2. How is authority perceived?
3. What are the general attitudes on discipline and leadership?
4. Where do the areas of deficiency exist?

The research will be accomplished by using closed ended surveys designed to specify which problems as identified above are the most predominant, as well as personal interviews with key figures within the NPFD. The Change Management Model will be the central tool used in the research as it applies to a needs assessment.

Background and Significance

The North Providence Fire Department (NPFDF) was formally established in November 1971 (North Providence Town Charter, 1971). Previously, there were five village volunteer fire companies. Under the guidance of the Fire Chief Charello, appointed by the Town of North Providence (Town) in 1971, each volunteer company took responsibility for a specific geographic area. A command structure was established for each station which provided its own table of organization. "Recruitment for the volunteers who staffed the trucks in the villages was predominantly through word of mouth and, largely, family dominated" (Scandariato, 1996).

In November of 1971, the Town Council of North Providence recognized the need to establish permanent fire protection. Since volunteers usually held full time jobs, a significant problem developed in staffing the trucks during the daytime hours. Without a formal standard for selection into the ranks of the fire department, twelve individuals were hired by political recommendation. During this time, "The fire department attempted to adopt a semi-military nature in their structure regarding authority and responsibility" (personal interview with Captain DiGuilio, October 3, 1997). Extensive rank structure was unnecessary at the time for only twelve individuals were hired. It was decided by the Mayor in 1978 that three Lieutenants' positions would be established initially, while the remaining nine would hold the rank of firefighter. "The promotions were based upon political affiliation without consideration for extent of education, technical expertise, or qualification for advancement" (personal interview with Captain Roy, October 13, 1997).

Between 1971, and August of 1989, the department added two Captains positions. Qualification for promotion was by oral examinations, with the final selection made by the

Mayor from among the top three candidates. "In 1989, the Town eliminated one fire station, leaving four stations with a total of five required officers and no movement from attrition" (personal interview with retired Captain D'Amico October 13, 1997).

It is important to note that "...no formal written policies were ever developed for officers' positions and, no clear description of duties ever existed" (personal interview with Chief Charello, November 2, 1997). The only notable difference between the ranks of Captain and Lieutenant, was the wage scale, which favored the Captain's rank.

"In 1989, the NPFDD made the transition from being a combination department with career men staffing the trucks during the daytime hours while paid call men covered the trucks during the nights, weekends and holidays to full time paid coverage" (Scandariato, 1996). This was accomplished by hiring an additional 48 men and women, thereby bringing the personnel strength to a total of eighty eight (personal discussion with Battalion Chief Clark, November 19, 1997).

"Separating administrative duty from friendship was especially difficult for the younger personnel" noted Captain DiGuilio (personal interview, October 3, 1997). Most of the personnel hired knew each other's family and had grown up together on the fire department as volunteers and paid on call firefighters. "It was a very close knit family, and if you did something against them they'd hold a grudge against you for life" (personal interview, October 1, 1997 with Captain DiGuilio).

During the time the NPFDD was a combination department, system requirements that were necessary for proper function and control were allowed to be relaxed in an effort to hold personnel on the ranks as paid-on-call firefighters.

“To maintain a maximum staffing level the town stressed the importance of responding with the trucks and performing at the fire and minimized the need for daily duties that were considered less glorious. This was a tradeoff by the Town to minimize the fact that the callmen were not earning enough during their tour to be considered adequately paid. This practice continued from 1971 until 1989. As a result, discipline was not effective and perceptions of departmental duties were not balanced. When an Officer attempted to practice some form of discipline, popular opinion would prevail over fact and departmental system requirements. This condition undermined the Officer’s authority, giving way to apathy especially among the senior officers” (personal interview with Captain DiGuilio, October 3,1997).

According to Captain Roy, “You couldn’t get anything done around here. After a while you said to yourself, why bother” (personal interview, October 13,1997). Therefore, leadership potential eroded and morale degenerated allowing poor work quality and inconsistent applications of power. Unknowingly, the Town inherited this bias during the transition. Over the course of time, the inability to control fire department policy at the company officer level affected every aspect of the fire department’s operations. From personal grooming and uniform regulations to fireground operations. On any given day, different interpretations of all department policies exist from station to station, truck to truck and sometimes man to man.

As was routine in larger, more established departments, the perceptions by the House Captain were “That they had the authority to affect policy as it pertained to the particular duties. Those that were deemed necessary while not engaged in emergency service were

maintenance of the station, apparatus and equipment, customer service and conduct” (personal interview, October 1, 1997 with Captain DiuGuilio).

From August 1989 to the present, the staffing level of the NPFDD has risen to 100 (personal interview with Chief Charello, November 2, 1997). During this time, several senior level officers have retired and these problems have been inherited by the new appointees to the rank of Captain.

There have been five changes in fire department administration since August, 1989. In each case the administrative changes were brought about politically. While chief administrators may have been changing at regular intervals, the symbolic systems changes applied never addressed the internal rank structure problems, clearly embedding them within the senior line firefighters with rank authority. Today, there are seven personnel holding the rank of Captain. Six of seven Captains hold positions of authority within four individual fire stations.

This research was conducted in conjunction with the Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) course titled Strategic Management of Change and is related to several topics of the course including Research Methodology for analysis, Problem Identification, Organizational Development and Change. All the information gleaned from the research as well as the recommendations developed, shall be presented to the Chief of the NPFDD to correct the areas in need of positive change within the Captain’s rank.

Literature Review

The literature review began with research on the topics of leadership and motivation within the fire service, discipline with due process, and fire service administration. The intention was to gain a greater understanding of these three areas as they apply to the fire service.

Administration

Several text books were examined and many excerpts from periodical publications were reviewed. Goldblach (1995) asserted:

“There is often conflict between line and staff personnel in an organization and that clarification is needed between the basic relationships between line and staff. All concerned must be trained carefully as to what their responsibilities are. To insure that a unit or an organization will function efficiently there must be no confusion as to who is responsible for getting the job done. This concept is called unity of command” (p 233).

Within the entire administrative staff and also throughout the areas where staff and line fail to interact are where the greatest negative impact occurs within an organization. Strategic management of line and staff resources is necessary to move an organization forward minimizing negative impact. “How strategic management and thinking are applied and implemented in an organization is highly dependent on the corporate culture-the pattern of beliefs and rules that shape individual behavior in organizations” (Williams, 1991, p.19).

However, in a politically driven environment, policy and process are governed by whim, personal agenda and abuse of power. “Most people on the job, especially people in management positions, do not understand what the job is, not what is right or wrong” (Walton 1984). Walton (1984) also adds that “informal organizations tend to run things” (p.71).

Discipline

“The Fire Service is no longer a totally static organization which only waits to react to an emergency. The changes in performance expectations have become extensive and demanding” (Conroy 1994, p.2). Therefore, Grant and Hoover (1994) argue that “Having rules that are not enforced is more damaging than having no rules at all because this teaches fire fighters that rules don’t matter” (p.181). Grant and Hoover (1994), identify this misapplication between Legitimate Power and Referent Power by clarifying:

“Legitimate power” is gained through the follower’s perception that the leader has the power and, therefore it is their obligation to follow. Whereas “Referent power” is gained by developing sincere relationships with followers that generate feelings of admiration for the leader and a desire to associate with the leader” (p.18). Shouldis, (1993) stated “Maintaining discipline in the fire service can be an exceedingly difficult and delicate task, because it is only natural that a fire company will develop close emotional bonds as they live, train, and respond as a unit” (p.29). Consistency of policy application is always at the forefront of disagreement within the fire service.

Of the many duties of the Company officer, disciplining personnel is the most difficult. Soos (1991) stated "Disciplining an employee is never a pleasant task and is often delayed which is unfair to the employee in question as well as to other members of the department" (p.5).

During the research, the facts identified as key components of an effective written discipline policy surfaced. Bryson (1994) leads the discussion believing "...discipline should be rehabilitative rather than punitive in nature, that there should be strong emphasis on confidentiality when dealing with discipline issues" (p.7). Also, Soos (1991) contended that "...each individual who is responsible to discipline others must be well versed in the rules and regulations of the disciplinary process in their department" (p.25). Without a global understanding of the processes in effect to be applied when necessary, consistency of application will not be accomplished. Those policies should be relative to legal, federal, state and local standards as they may apply to due process. Of those three areas of jurisdiction, Maher (1989) identified local ordinances as "...the statutes most likely to impact fire department disciplinary actions" (p.24).

Leadership

"Establishing constancy of purpose means (a) innovation; (b) research and education; (c) continuous improvement of product and service; (d) maintenance of equipment, furniture and fixtures, and new aids to production in the office but, management must lead the way. Only management can initiate improvement in quality and productivity" (Walton. 1984, p.56). Furthering the argument regarding total service

quality, Shearer (1991) stated, "From the Fire Officers viewpoint, personnel management and leadership go hand-in-hand" (p.47). It is therefore the obligation of the fire officer to manage his/her people by demonstrating outstanding leadership quality. Virtually every aspect of the Officer's success or failure is hinged upon how well he/she administers sound leadership principles during his/her applications of personnel management.

Addressing the personal needs of the firefighter is a motivational tool employed by many Fire Chiefs to make a positive global change on a local level. Incorporating personnel by way of committee allows them to believe they have input in the decision making process. "The implications of this for the fire service are clear: If you can lead personnel to act even in small ways, the way you want them to, they will eventually come to believe in what they are being asked to do" (Henry, 1995, p.19).

Procedures

Using the Change Management Model (The National Fire Academy Strategic Management of Change course, 1996), a needs assessment analysis was conducted. Identification of the factors judged by consensus was determined by popular understanding of culturally accepted norms as they applied to the Change Management Model (SMOC, 1997). Consideration of each question and potential interpretation was critical in the development of the survey. Questions were screened to illuminate any topics that may have been perceived as possessing a hidden agenda which may be damaging to

one individual or particular group of people. A field test of the survey was administered to four Battalion Chiefs' as part of the research to direct the focus of the questions towards midlevel management positions. When the surveys were administered to the body of the organization, careful consideration was given to ensure that exactly the same answers were provided when a clarification was needed. In each case where a explanation was given for clarification of a question, the decision was noted. In three subsequent administrations of the survey, where the same clarifications were necessary, the same answers were given.

The surveys were completed on a voluntary basis which ensured anonymity by having no areas for identification of participant or group, to all 100 members of the NPF. Of the 100, 57(57%) completed the survey. However, two surveys had to be disregarded because the responders failed the answer every question leaving 55 surveys (55%) for analysis. To encourage participation in the survey a short motivational speech was given to each group. The participatory goals as stated, reflected research question criteria.

A special consideration was noted in the survey whereby the questions seemed to enjoin only the upper ranks to scrutiny (see Appendix A). This was intended to eliminate or at least minimize the possibility for assumption of intent in the line of questions. There is also a clear segment of the population missing from the application to scrutinize. The rank of firefighter had no consideration given for judgment. The primary focus was on gathering a consensus on the upper levels of rank responsibility. It was stated during the introduction of the survey, that the firefighters had no clear authority to administer policy and procedure and therefore would not be judged upon in those areas. All personnel were directed not to discuss their choices with their

coworkers until everyone had a chance to answer the survey themselves without bias.

There were four personal interviews held between September 10, and November 20. Captains: Albanese, a 10 year veteran with one year experience as House Captain (Station 4, "D" group); DiGuilio, a 29 year veteran with 10 years experience as House Captain (Station 1, "A" group); Giammarco, a 24 year veteran with 8 years experience as House Captain (Station 3, "C" group); and Roy, a 28 year veteran with 4 years experience as House Captain (Station 2, "B" group). During the interviews, the questions were asked in the same order in an attempt to maintain continuity. The actual interviews were conducted very informally and permission was given by each interviewee to publish their views.

The limitations of the research paralleled the resistive forces identified during the planning phase of the survey. Such resistive forces included a general suspicion of the membership against participating in a project which may have had a detrimental effect on one person or group of individuals. Also, a hidden agenda was assumed by the local firefighters' union representatives and, as such, resulted in casual complacency in participation.

Results

The questions were designed to give the participants a range of options. Using the Force Field Analysis discussed in the Strategic Management of Change course (August 1997), the directing resistive and supporting forces were similarly driven by three distinct areas of deficiency; Leadership, Administrative functions and Discipline. To extract critical

opinion, these questions were used to identify a more detailed analysis of these areas. Of the one hundred personnel employed, fifty-five elected to participate. Answers were rounded to the nearest whole number for clarity. All but one company officer chose to participate anonymously.

The consensus of questions 1, 4, 5, 6, 12, and 13 indicate a lack of administrative confidence which is relative to questions 1 and 4 of the research methodology. It is necessary to note the differences of opinion with regard to Question 1 as they relate to Staff vs. Line functions (see Table 1). Statistics indicate the personnel believe they are performing to the institutionalized perceptions of the past with great success. In contrast they believe the administration is at best fair in its ability to handle fire department issues. Question 2 is indicative of the consensus that operationally, there is satisfactory performance proclaimed within the application of the Incident Command System. Question 3 is directed at the administration of discipline which is believed to be applied inconsistently. The primary criticism as identified in these areas rests with the department managers.

Using the Force Field Analysis (SMOC, 1997), Of the eight topics identified as major resistive forces, the areas of Administration (80%), Leadership (75%), and Discipline (50%) were the highest motivators of dissatisfaction in performance and areas of deficiency (see Table 1). Question 4 identifies eight separate but related areas prevalent in perceptions of authority. Clearly, Leadership, Discipline and Administration were selected as the greatest problem areas (see Table 2).

Table 1

3.) How would you rate the Fire department in the following areas?

A. Administrative

a. Excellent	5%
b. Good	26%
c. Fair	45%
d. Poor	34%

B. Fire Operations

a. Excellent	37%
b. Good	55%
c. Fair	8%
d. Poor	0%

C. Rescue Operations

a. Excellent	55%
b. Good	39%
c. Fair	9%
d. Poor	0%

Table 2

4.) Where do you believe the biggest problems lie within our Department?

<i>Topic of choice</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
a Leadership	75%
b. Training	5%
c. Discipline	50%
d. Administration	80%
e. Fire Suppression	10%
f. Fire Prevention	0%
g. PIO	15%
h. Labor Relations	40%

These results are also validated from the percentages of choice in questions 5, 6, and 7 respectively (see Table 3).

Table 3

5.) Do the Fire Captains provide for your concerns to be addressed through the chain of command?

a. Yes	33%
b. No	67%

6.) Do you believe the B/C's are doing everything they can to help you realize your potential?

a. Yes	36%
b. No	64%

7.) Which area should be improved upon first?

a. Administration	20%
b. Operations	15%
c. Leadership	35%
d. Discipline	30%

Of the five house Captains responsible for station management, based upon the survey results, none were perceived as being effective in applying their rank authority to their responsibilities (see Table 4).

Table 4

8.) Do you believe the Fire Captains are doing everything they should to organize, lead, and direct within their houses?

a. Yes	22%
b. No	78%

9.) Which areas should they improve upon first?

a. Organization	35%
b. Discipline	15%
c. Delegation	10%
d. Leadership	20%

Questions 10 and 11 identified differences of opinion on each level of authority with regard to power and responsibility. Where Question 8 and 9 identified the Captains rank as a specific target for critique, question 10 and 11 focused on the Lieutenants' position (see Table 5). As it is believed each succeeding rank should carry different responsibilities, the Lieutenants rank was judged on its leadership and motivation profiles. This question was also in keeping with research Question 2.

While there were favorable results regarding the lieutenant's position, the areas most in need of improvement were in developing company efficiency and leadership (see Table 6

Table 5

10.) Do you believe the Fire Lieutenants are doing everything they should to lead, direct and supervise you towards achieving your goals?	
a. Yes	48%
b. No	52%
11.) What area should the Fire Lieutenants improve upon?	
a. Leadership	20%
b. Discipline	15%
c. Training	5%
d. Company Efficiency	25%

Question 12 challenged the institutionalized ideas of purpose. Of the fifty-five respondents, 76% did not know the formal mission statement of the NPFD (see Table 6).

Table 6

12.) Do you know what the formal mission statement is of the NPFD?		
a. Yes	24%	
b. No	76%	

The results of the respondent's answers to Question 13, provide greater insight into the reason for the Firefighters' overall dissatisfaction with the administration. (see Table 7).

To date there have been 118 people hired since 1971 to the North Providence Fire Department. Of those 115, thirteen have retired in 26 years. Eighty-one percent of those responding could not identify the present fire administration's vision.

Table 7

13.) Can you identify the present administration's vision?		
a. Yes	19%	
b. No	81%	

Question 14, paralleled the House Captains' feelings when answering question 5 (Appendix B) by overwhelmingly stating that consistency is the most important factor in discipline. This also draws from the background of the department when discipline was based upon popular opinion and not system policy (see Table 8)

Table 8

14). If you were to be disciplined, what would be the most important factor in your acceptance the consequences of your actions?		
a. Due Process	13%	
b. Fairness	29%	
c. Consistency	47%	
d. Confidentiality	11%	

Question 15 probed the issue of authority by assessing the perception of the dominant rank figure within the fire station. The ambiguity of difference between Lieutenant and Captain is typified by the closeness of the percentages amongst those surveyed. Of those surveyed, 57% believed the Captains should be the most dominant figure while 41% chose the Lieutenants rank (see Table 9).

Table 9

15.) Which Officer should be the most dominant within the fire station?	
a. Battalion Chief	0%
b. Captain	57%
c. Lieutenant	41%
d. Chief	2%

During the interviews with the House Captains, the following information surfaced when asked five specific questions (see Appendix B).

Interview Question 1 investigated the Captains' attempts to institute policy changes within their perceived authority. Captain Giammarco typified the results with "...most policy was ignored and the paperwork misplaced or torn down". Conroy (1994) supports Giammarcos' claim by stating, "Some members of the organization have not adjusted well to these mandated increases in productivity."

Interview Question 2 discussed discipline. While all Captains alluded to the lack of unity of command, Captain Roy identified the now institutionalized philosophy by quoting past Chief Henry Parisi with "...we were told by Henry to just come in, do what you have to do and go home".

Interview Question 3 specifically asked where the problem of a lack of motivation to all the necessary duties originated. Captain DiGuilios' answer encapsulated the essence

of common perceptions among the then callmen, by stating “...they just can't accept their duties and they're not here to clean or anything -just fight fires. This is a holdover from the call system”.

Interview Question 4 had consensus of all four Captains that the current Rules and Regulations are “a good starting point” but there is room for improvement.

Interview Question 5 elicited personal opinion of needs to affect positive improvement and as anticipated answers varied from Captain to Captain.

Identified areas of need as stated were:

- The development of an apolitical discipline policy.
- Administrative consistency with regard to Leadership, Discipline and rank authority.
- Clarification and identification of duties and responsibilities.

Discussion

Developing a Framework for Change

As time passed, more individuals were hired to the North Providence Fire Department. However, while the NPFD was growing in its personnel ranks, there was very little organizational structure established. Differences in the ranks of Captain and Lieutenant were virtually indistinguishable by daily duties. Although there remained a slight difference in wages, the duties and responsibilities were shared by each without a differentiation of authority or control relative to organizational vision or span of control. This practice

continued until August of 1989, when the Town decided to provide around the clock coverage by hiring additional personnel.

Although the addition was heralded as a major accomplishment for the town, the fire department administrators failed to consider all aspects necessary for a smooth transition including: the need for training, span of control, definition of duties and responsibilities, defined authority within the rank structure, and discipline. Walton, (1982) supported this concept by stating, "In hiring people, management takes responsibility for their success or failure" (p.56). Without addressing these issues, there was no formal control within the stations as applied through the ranks. "It is highly recommended that all supervisory personnel who are responsible for disciplinary action are well versed in all policies that relate to discipline" (Rutgers, 1991).

Considering the fact that each house was staffed by former members of the volunteer fire companies initially, the problems of rank authority and discipline were compounded by the residual emotional attachment institutionalized by years of volunteer rivalries, pride, and political control.

Even choosing an effective quality practice geared to the performance level of the organization is not enough. What is needed is a framework for developing a comprehensive, yet pragmatic portfolio of improvement initiatives that align with the organizations' improvement objectives. By establishing a change portfolio, an organization can more effectively deploy resources to effect change and manage expectations during the process of change. What is also needed to set the improvement objectives are thorough review by the organization of three critical dimensions of change: pace, degree, and breadth (Heiss 1993).

On September 8, 1997, all commissioned officers holding the rank of Captain and Battalion Chief were ordered to attend an organizational meeting to discuss policy and procedure as it applied to many issues including: Captains authority, personal viewpoints, perceived departmental problems, leadership and proposed changes. North Providence Fire Chief Bernard Charello shared his vision with the senior officers in an effort to realign shared philosophy and clarify department goals. Of the many topics covered, the depth of the managerial aspect within the ranks took precedence. Coleman (1995), stated that "A manager is the person who makes sure that things are done right." Williams (1991) identified where an officer may fail the system by stating "Daily beliefs shape day-to-day decisions and influence individual behavior on the job. There are survival rules that govern how the game is played for individuals in their work life". The company officers following these rules of survival fail to believe in the formal system. This is another indication of a clear deficiency in the Administration's inability to convey and administer over time the complete package of departmental system requirements to the personnel and enforce them.

Once these problems were identified, a unified change in behavior was mandated by all. Duck (1993) contends that "The first change in behavior should be that of top executives" (p. 112).

Throughout the literature review there is a common understanding that has lead this author to attempt implementation of theory which may have a positive impact within areas of need in the North Providence Fire Department. Evidently the negative issues of leadership, discipline and administration as they apply to duty have been identified from the data collected. One conclusion that is drawn from this is in the relationship between the

lack of administrative vision, and coordination between the line and staff officers. While considering the background of this institutionalized problem, it became apparent that a complete retooling of responsibilities as they apply to the perception of the ranking officers was necessary to create positive change within the department.. This is also a deficiency that is echoed by Captains Roy and Giammarco during the interviews alluding to the a lack of coordination at the Chiefs' level not working together (See Appendix B).

A correlation between the amount of time the interviewees had on the job and how long they had been in their present position was identified during the interviews. The longer the personnel were on the job, the more skeptical they were of changing the personnel's attitudes on authority and control.

The long term effects of political influence, which negate leadership, manipulates discipline and misdirects administrative effort against positive change, have had profoundly negative consequences upon a generation of firefighters within the NPFd.

To exercise the essence of the texts reviewed, and the data acquired through the research questions and the surveys, the following recommendations are offered for consideration to fulfill the purpose of this project.

Recommendations

The nature of these proposed changes represent a major deviation from the way the North Providence Fire Department currently functions. The change is fairly narrow in scope and appears to micromanage somewhat, but will significantly affect the departments' processes, as well as the daily work routine and personnel attitudes.

- **Recommendation 1:** Through training, discuss the current situation with the Captains and identify areas of necessary reorganization. These areas should include:
 - Equipment/Truck cleaning responsibilities
 - Station Duties
 - Administrative duties
 - Accountability to discipline policy and procedure

While these procedures are already identified in the current Rules and Regulations, there are areas that are new to the concept of House Captain responsibility. Therefore:

- The Captain shall designate to each shift, certain areas of the truck and the equipment that shall be maintained by the appointed company officer and his crew. This shall include but not be limited to Hose Maintenance and Small tools and Appliances cleaning.
- The House Captains shall identify areas of regular upkeep of the stations and delegate that authority to each company officer as necessary.
- The Captains shall develop and maintain duty sheets of completion of delegated tasks which shall be used as an evaluation tool monitoring work performed and

necessary planning. Upon completion and at the end of each month, the House Captains shall forward a summary of work performed and changes necessary to institutionalize the processes to the Battalion Chief's Office.

- By way of monitoring the work quality performed as delegated, the House Captains shall take the necessary steps to identify resistive forces and discipline as necessary.

This recommendation is relative to areas of administrative duty and delegation which were identified as areas in need of improvement.

Recommendation 2: The importance of keeping four basic tasks identified to each house to ensure equal delegation of duties to all groups should be stressed. A way for Captains to check if each assigned task was performed as scheduled is to require the company Officer use of the station log books to identify that the tasks were completed. A completion report is then forwarded to the Battalion level for analysis.

This recommendation correlates with interview data that suggested poor communication between line and staff.

Recommendation 3: A Transition Management Team should be developed to assist in adjusting the pace and scope of proposed changes. This team shall be composed of the four Battalion Chiefs' whose tasks shall include:

- Analysis of current systems approaches.
- Team Building.
- Evaluation, analysis and revision of the planning stages as necessary. Where there is a particular problem, a review of the plan by the Transition Management Team shall be performed.

Recommendation 4: Where there is a particular problem, a review of the plan, subsequent training or discipline shall be performed.

Recommendation 5: All the necessary forms for administrative management will be provided to assist the Captains in their duties. This shall be accomplished by:

- Communication of current proposed changes.
- Collaboration with all personnel, employing top down and bottom up involvement.
- Demonstration of resolve to the proposed changes through persistence and consistency.
- Review and Evaluation of plans according to current time tables.

This final recommendation is proposed to address the need for the administration of the fire department to keep the vision fresh, the plan focused , the implementation current and the review timely.

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Appendix A

North Providence Fire Department Departmental Survey

The following questions are designed to give you a range of options. This survey is vital in the development of your fire department.

Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge. **BE Honest!**

Do Not discuss your choices with your coworkers until they have had a chance to answer the survey themselves.

1.) How would you rate the Fire department in the following areas:

A.). Administrative

- a. Excellent
- b. Good
- c. Fair
- d. Poor

B.). Fire Operations

- a. Excellent
- b. Good
- c. Fair
- d. Poor

C.). Rescue Operations

- a. Excellent
- b. Good
- c. Fair
- d. Poor

2.) How well do you believe the ICS is administered?

- a. Excellent
- b. Good
- c. Fair
- d. Poor

3.) How well is discipline administered?

- a. Consistent
- b. Inconsistent

4.) Where do you believe the biggest problems lie within our department?

- | | | | |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|--------------------|
| a. Leadership | b. Training | c. Discipline | d. Administration |
| e. Fire Supp | f. Fire Prev | g. PIO | f. Labor Relations |

5.) Do the Fire Captains provide for your concerns to be addressed through the chain of command?

- a. Yes
- b. No

- 6.) Do you believe the B/C's are doing everything they can to help you realize your potential?
a. Yes b. No
- 7.) Which 2 areas should be improved upon.
a. Administration
b. Operations
c. Leadership
d. Discipline
- 8.) Do You believe the Fire Captains are doing everything they should to organize, lead, and direct within their houses?
a. Yes b. No
- 9.) What area should they improve upon first?
a. Organization
b. Discipline
c. Delegation
d. Leadership
- 10.) Do you believe the Fire Lieutenants are doing everything they should to lead, direct and supervise you towards achieving your goals?
a. Yes b. No
- 11.) What area should the Fire Lieutenants improve upon?
a. Leadership
b. Discipline
c. Training
d. Company Efficiency
- 12.) Do you know what the formal mission statement is of the NPFD?
a. Yes b. No
- 13.) Can you identify the present administrations vision?
a. Yes b. No
- 14.) If you were to be disciplined, what would be the most important factor in your acceptance the consequences of your actions?
a. Due Process
b. Fairness
c. Consistency
d. Confidentiality

- 15.) Which Officer should be the most dominant within the fire station?
- a. Battalion Chief
 - b. Captain
 - c. Lieutenant
 - d. Chief

Appendix B

Question 1: Have you ever tried to institute a policy in your station and if so what happened?

Captain Giammarco stated, "...most of the policy was ignored and the paperwork misplaced." (Personal interview, October 3, 1997.)

Captains' Roy and DiGuilio echoed similar occurrences.

Captain Albanese: "At first these guys were very resistive to change, but this is the way it has to be." (Personal interview, October 14, 1997)

Question 2: Why didn't you try to discipline someone for these actions?

Paraphrasing all four Captains: "There was no backing at the top."

Captain Roy, "We were told by Henry (Chief Parisi) to just come in do what you have to do and go home. Don't make waves." (Personal interview October 13. 1997)

Question 3: Where do you believe this problem comes from?

Captain DiGuilio, "They just can't accept their duties and they're not here to clean or anything--just fight fires. This is a holdover from the call system." (Personal interview, October 1, 1997)

Captain Albanese, " ...some of these guys just never grew up. Jealousy and animosity are a huge factor in directing duties."

Captain Giammarco, "...this is the me, me. me fire department. There aren't enough team players here."

Question 4: Do the current Rules and Regulations adequately cover what you need to be effective as a House Captain?

Albanese, "...they are outdated but useable. I mean everything is in there but we just have to follow it."

Giammarco, "...nobody follows those written rules because they were developed by the wrong people back then" "...if you take them as they are they are a good starting point..."

Roy, "To be honest with you Chief, I never really paid attention to them, the guys just wouldn't follow orders anyway."

Question 5: In your own words, can you tell me what you think we need at this time to make a positive improvement?

DiGuilio: "Discipline, Administrative backing, respect for rank."

Roy: "Let them know who's in charge..." "...the chief should back us without fear of political interference and the Chief and the B/C's aren't working together."

Giammarco: "Backing is very important. Everybody should be on the same page and the chiefs aren't."

Albanese: "...discipline has to be unimpeded by political interference or agenda." "...there is a definite need for leadership training, and more coordinated administrative unity between the B/C's."